



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Fillmore Field Office

95 East 500 North

Fillmore, UT 84631

<http://www.blm.gov/ut/st/en/fo/fillmore.html>



IN REPLY REFER TO:
4720 (UTW02000)

November 1, 2012

Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review and comment is the Preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Swasey Herd Management Area Wild Horse Gather (DOI-BLM-UT-W020-2012-0024-EA). This EA has been prepared to analyze the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Fillmore Field Office proposal to gather approximately 264 wild horses and remove approximately 164 excess wild horses from within and outside the Swasey Herd Management Area (HMA) beginning around January 4, 2013. The proposal also includes a plan to apply fertility control to approximately 50 mares and release them back to the HMA.

This document is tiered to the House Range Resource Area Final Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS), 1986. Should a determination be made that implementation of the proposed or alternative actions would not result in "significant environmental impacts" or "significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the RMP/EIS", a Finding of No Significant Impact will be prepared to document that determination, and a Decision Record issued providing the rationale for approving the chosen alternative.

The Swasey HMA is approximately 120,113 acres of public and state lands, and is located 50 miles west of Delta, Utah. The HMA ranges from an elevation of 4,500 feet in the valleys to 9,600 feet at the top of Swasey Peak.

The current Appropriate Management Level (AML) for the Swasey HMA is 70-100 wild horses. The AML for the HMA was set in the House Range Resource Area Final RMP/EIS (1986) which allows for the management of "wild horse herds in the short term to maintain the current viability of the herd. (This will require the periodic removal of wild horses.)", and they should be managed "in accordance with the Wild Horse and Burro Act, PL-92-195." The RMP/EIS also allocated forage for wild horses, livestock, and wildlife.

Wild horse populations above AML compete for forage, water and space allocated to wildlife and livestock. High populations of wild horses impact riparian areas with increased trailing, vegetative use, and trampling. Wild horses will drive away livestock and other native ungulates from watering and feeding areas (Miller, 1981)

In order to meet local and national wild horse program goals, the objectives would be to:

- Slow population growth to maximize the time between gathers to remove excess horses;
- Reduce the number of wild horses being placed in short-term holding of long-term pastures;
- Maintain wild horse populations within AMLs;
- Remove wild horses that occupy areas outside the Swasey HMA boundary; and
- Maintain a thriving, natural ecological balance and multiple use relationship on public lands in the Swasey HMA.

Comments on the Swasey Herd Management Area Wild Horse Gather Plan Preliminary Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-UT-W020-2012-0024-EA will be accepted for 30 days until November 30, 2012. Interested individuals should mail written comments to the BLM Fillmore Field Office, 95 E 500 N, Fillmore, UT 84631 Attn: Michael D. Gates, Field Manager or send an email to: blm_ut_fm_swasey@blm.gov. Any other comments will not be accepted. The Preliminary EA is posted at http://www.blm.gov/ut/st/en/prog/wild_horse_and_burro. Comments need to be post marked or emailed to blm_ut_fm_swasey@blm.gov no later than December 4, 2012.

If you have any questions on this matter, please contact Eric Reid, BLM Fillmore Field Office Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, at (435) 743-3114.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael D. Gates", followed by a stylized flourish.

Michael D. Gates
Field Manager